



## Glossary of Quilting Terms and Definitions

**Applique:** A technique where fabric shapes are cut and sewn onto a fabric block or quilt top. Typically, a fusible material is ironed to the wrong side of a shape, and then ironed to the background fabric. There are many types of appliques: Needle turned: this involves hand work where you use a needle to turn edge under and then hand stitch in place. Raw edge applique: technique used to fuse your shape to fabric, then use a decorative stitch to adhere to quilt block. Applique is used to embellish or create interest in a block or quilt.

**Backing:** A quilt consists of three layers. A quilt top is either pieced or a single piece of fabric. The next layer is batting. The bottom layer of a quilt is a piece of fabric that is generally 4 inches longer and wider on all sides, this allows for quilting. For example, if quilt top measures 60×60, backing and batting should measure at least 68×68. Backing fabric can be a single piece of extra wide backing fabric or a fabric of your choice which will be sewn together to the size needed. Some quilters like to piece their entire backing with scraps of fabric.

**Backstitch:** A stitch used to secure the stitch at the beginning and end of a seam by stitching 2 to 4 stitches forward, 2- 4 stitches back and then proceeding with your seam. This technique is done to secure the seam and ensure it does not pull apart during piecing or quilting of quilt.

**Basting:** Long stitches used to temporarily hold fabric in place, can be done by hand or by machine. It is also used to hold all three layers (quilt top, batting and backing) in place when ready for quilting. It is not necessary to secure thread knots on either ends of the stitching, as it is merely a way to ensure that your project stays secure and does not shift. These stitches can be removed once quilting is complete.

**Batting:** A product used between the quilt top and quilt backing. Batting is used for bed quilts, wall hangings, quilted clothing, and home décor. Batting is also referred to as Wadding. It is generally made from cotton, cotton/polyester blend, bamboo, wool, or bamboo/cotton blend. There are two types of batting: with scrim and without scrim.

**Bearding:** Batting fibers that poke through to the top of the quilt during the quilting process is undesirable. This is caused by bad batting and will create this effect on the front and back of quilt. Bearding happens when fibers in your batting pull apart and migrate through the fabric fibers of your quilt. You will most often notice this after a quilt is first washed. This is why it is important to choose good quality batting.

**Between:** Needles made specifically to sew all layers together during the hand quilting process. Also used for hand sewing binding when finishing quilt.

**Bias:** The length or width of woven fabric is considered straight grain, there is no stretch when fabric is on the straight of grain. When you cut diagonally at 45-degree angle across the straight grain, you will be on bias. When cutting on the Bias you will always have a greater amount of stretch.

**Bias Tape:** Pre-made strips of fabric in various sizes that are cut diagonally across the grain to give the fabric some movement so it will turn curves nicely. Used for binding a quilt.

**Binding:** Finishing of the quilt. Long, thin fabric strips that are attached to the raw edges of a quilt.



**Blanket Stitch:** An embroidery stitch used to attach appliqued fabric to a main fabric. Can be machine or hand stitched.

**Bleeding:** When color or dyes from one fabric transfers to another during washing. This is due to hand dyes or color saturated fabrics losing their dyes when they are wet. Most commonly seen when washing vividly colored fabrics, particularly purples and reds. Always best to wash colors separately before cutting and piecing.

**Blocks:** The unit that is designed for a quilt. Generally, there will be many blocks in a quilt. A quilt block can be a single piece of fabric cut with a rotary cutter into a square or a block that has been pieced using many pieces of fabric and sewn together using  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch seam allowance.

**Blocking:** When a block is not square, a process that requires wetting and pressing fabric to a proper square block. This is also done using steam to help stretch portions of your block to match other blocks.

**Borders:** Strips of fabric that frame the edges of the quilt. You can have one or many borders in a quilt top. You may also have borders surrounding your quilt blocks, also known as sashing, or as part of quilt block design.

**Cake Layers:** Fabric that is cut into 10" squares. These can be bought pre- packaged in many quilt stores.

**Chain Piecing:** This technique is used when sewing many quilt pieces that are identical. Example: sewing 144 – 2-inch squares together. Feed these pieces through your machine, right sides together, sewing consecutively without cutting thread, also called fast feed. Cut thread later when all units have been sewn together.

**Charm Pack:** A variety of a fabric line cut into 5" squares. Charm packs are sold in many quilt shops and are packaged by numerous fabric retailers. The number in bundles can vary among manufacturers.

**Continuous Line Quilting:** A pattern in quilting in which the design line continues from start to finish so you don't have multiple stops and starts.

**Corner Square:** A square that is sewn to the ends of the top and bottom borders before added to a quilt. Side borders will be sewn to the quilt first.

**Corner Triangle:** The triangles set in the corners of a quilt that is set on "Point." These are half square triangles, meaning the straight of grain is on the outer edges of the triangle.

**Cornerstones:** A name given to the small blocks that join sashing strips together surrounding a block or blocks in a quilt top.

**Crosswise Grain:** The threads of woven fabric that run perpendicular to the selvage.

**Drape:** This is the way a quilt will feel or hang after it is quilted. The batting choice, as well as how much quilting is done, will determine how a quilt will drape. Higher quality batting is able to take more stitches and still retain a soft, cozy feel, whereas cheaper battings will turn to a stiffer feel.

**Ease:** Distributing the fabric evenly while long arm quilting so that the quilt lies flat.



**Echo Quilting:** Echo or Shadow quilting is a technique where quilting is done around an outline of an applique piece on a quilt top or around a design or pattern. Then the quilting is echoed again and again around the previously stitched line. Continue to do this until the block is filled or desired effect is achieved.

**Fat Eighth:** A typical 1/8 yard of fabric is 4 ½" x 42". A fat eighth is 9" x 21". It produces a "fatter" square piece of fabric, providing more options for use.

**Fat Quarter:** A typical 1/4 yard of fabric is 9" x 44". A fat quarter is 18"x22." It produces a "fatter" square piece of fabric, providing more options for use.

**Feed Dogs:** Teeth like mechanisms that sit below the presser foot of a sewing machine and move fabric through the machine as you stitch. Feed dogs also help control stitch length. If you drop your feed dogs, you can achieve free motion quilting.

**Finger Pressing:** Walking your finger along a seam, pressing with your nail or tip of finger to crease it without use of iron.

Tips for Choosing and Using the Right Ruler

**Free Motion Quilting:** A process requiring free motion quilting, darning, or hopping foot. Requires you to drop your feed dogs so you can move fabric freely in all directions. Special gloves marketed for free motion quilting can help in controlling the fabric by providing extra grip.

**Foundation Piecing:** A method used for joining together small pieces of fabric to form a more complicated pattern or design. It is done by sewing small pieces of fabric onto foundation paper or fabric.

**Grain:** The direction of threads running through a woven fabric.

**Half Square Triangles:** A triangle that is created when you cut a square from one corner to opposite corner (45-degree angle). Straight of grain is on the short, outer sides of the triangle.

**Hand:** A term used to describe the feel and texture of a fabric. "This fabric has a nice hand to it."

**Interfacing:** The term for a variety of materials that are used on the wrong side (either fused or sewn in) of a fabric to give it more stability or loft or whatever the desired effect may be.

**Jelly Roll:** Fabric cut into 2 ½ inch strips and wound into a roll. Used for strip piecing and other various patterns, and also binding.

**Lattice:** Same as sashing. A border that is created around blocks of a quilt, most often it is called lattice when your blocks of quilt are set on point (set in to look like a diamond as opposed to a square).

**Loft:** Loft is another word for thickness. The higher the loft of batting the thicker the quilt, this does not necessarily mean the warmer your quilt. There are wool battings that are very thin and super warm.

\*\*The thicker your batting, the more difficult it will be to baste.



**Micro Quilting:** Quilting that is done as background fill, small and precise micro patterns. Micro quilting contrasts with your primary motifs and actually makes them stand out in a quilt. This technique adds visual interest, definition, and texture.

**Mitered-Corners:** A binding strip that is sewn and folded at a 45-degree angle at each corner, giving the appearance of a frame corner.

**Negative Space:** Unoccupied area that surrounds another shape in a project. Negative space can be in a block or the area surrounding a block. It encompasses the areas and flows in, around and between quilt blocks.

**Notions:** Small accessories used to aid in sewing and quilting: scissors, needles, thread, seam ripper, zippers, etc.

**On Point:** A block that is placed at a 45-degree angle on the quilt top.

**Patchwork:** The art of sewing small pieces of fabric together to make a larger fabric or design. It is then usually quilted.

**Piecing:** Process where fabric pieces are sewn together to form a block, garment, or quilt.

**Pressing:** An iron is used to press a seam after stitching. You do not move the iron around, as that would cause stretching or distortion of the seam. Instead, set the iron onto the seam, lift, and set again. Repeat until the seam is pressed.

**Quarter Inch Foot:** Presser foot that has a guide to achieve a  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch seam.

**Quarter-Square Triangle:** Triangle made when you cut a square diagonally twice from corner to opposite corner at 45-degree angles. Making an X in center of block. Straight grain will be on long edge of triangle. You will obtain 4 triangles from one square.

**Quilt-As-You-Go:** Process where each block or section is layered (top, batting, backing) and quilted separately. Each separately quilted block or section can then be assembled into a larger quilt top.

**Quilting:** The process of sewing the three quilt layers together, using stitches in decorative patterns as motifs, or in utilitarian patterns, such as straight lines with bigger stitches. Quilting is generally done by hand or machine.

**Quilt Challenge:** Many people making a quilt project with predetermined rules/criteria; a friendly competition.

**Quilt Frame:** Can be a small quilt hoop or a large floor frame that holds the 3 layers of a quilt (top, batting, and backing) as it is hand quilted.

**Quilt Hoop:** Two circles that hold the quilt layers together during the quilting process. One of the circles has an adjustment to fit over layers.

**Quilt Label:** A patch or an area on the back of the quilt. Generally, the quilt label will have a date, recipient name and name of its maker. Perhaps even a little about the quilt.



**Quilt Sandwich:** The three layers of a quilt: the quilt top, the quilt batting, the quilt backing.

**Quilt Sleeve:** A strip of fabric that is applied to a quilt to enable hanging. A rod often slipped through the sleeve.

**Hand Quilting Thread:** Thread used to quilt the three layers together by hand. This thread is generally not used in a sewing machine as it is very thick.

**Redwork:** The name given to the embroidery technique where pictures are “drawn” with a series of joined stitches. Preferred stitches are usually backstitch or stem stitch, and the picture is embroidered in a single red color. (It can also be stitched in black or blue for variation.)

**Right Side:** The “front” side of the fabric; usually the distinctly printed side of the fabric.

**Rocker Quilting Stitch:** Stitch used when hand quilting when you gently rock needle down through quilt and then back up in a running stitch.

**Rotary Cutter:** Cutting tool for quilting has a very sharp round blade. Must be used on a cutting mat and preferably with a quilting ruler.

**Rotary Mat:** Cutting surface that is self-healing. Used with fabric and rotary cutters.

**Rotary Rulers:** Rulers made from Plexiglas type material. They have a raised edge to guide rotary cutters along the edge.

**Running Stitch:** A style of stitch where the needle goes in and out of fabric in a continual motion.

**Sandpaper Circles:** Circles made of sandpaper with adhesive on one side. Place adhesive side to bottom side of rotary rulers to prevent slippage.

**Sashing:** Strips of fabric sewn around or between blocks of a quilt top. These strips are generally joined together by cornerstone blocks or sashing squares. See Lattice.

**Sashing Squares:** Squares used to sew sashing together. See Cornerstones.

**Scrap Quilts:** Quilts that are made from various fabrics, often scraps from other projects or clothing. There are many patterns for this style of quilt, or you just start sewing them together and cut them into blocks.

**Scrim:** A term used in batting where a thin layer of polyester is added to the cotton to be needle punched into, this gives stability to your batting, so it won't break apart within your quilt. Scrim adds poly to your batting so it will no longer be 100% cotton.

**Seam:** The line where two pieces of fabric are joined together by sewing them with thread.

**Seam Allowance:** The fabric between the sewing line and the raw edge. In quilting it is ¼ inch.

**Seam Ripper:** A tool used for picking or ripping out sewing stitches.

**Selvage:** Manufactured finished edge of fabric that prevents fraying before it gets to consumer. This is where you can find the name of the fabric line, company and colors that went into the fabric.



**Serging:** A method of looping threads over the raw edge of the fabric to finish the edge to prevent fraying. This is a Fun way to finish wall hangings.

**Setting the Seam:** When an iron is set on the seam before pressing it to the side or open depending on your project. Allows the thread to relax into your fabric and become more secure.

**Setting:** Arrangement of blocks and various fabrics in a quilt. A straight setting is when blocks are placed in vertical and horizontal grid like design. Diagonal is when a block is set on point, resembling a diamond.

**Sharps:** Sets of extra sharp sewing needles for hand piecing or applique. Many use this for bindings as well.

**Stab Stitching:** Process where the needle is pushed (stabbed) to back side of quilt sandwich with one hand and returned to top side with the other hand, pushing needle from back to front.

**Stash:** Fabrics that have been accumulated for projects, or because you really liked it, or because you have a fabric addiction.

**Stay Stitch:** Pre-sewing along the edge of a curve to help prevent stretching along the “bias” when assembling a garment together. Often used on the curves of sleeves for stability during garment construction.

**Tips for Choosing and Using the Right Ruler Stencils:** Designs that are cut into a template. Stencils are used for marking quilts during the quilting process.

**Stitch-in-the-Ditch:** A quilting term used to describe the method of stitching along existing seams in a patchwork piece or quilt top in order to quilt it together with the batting and backing.

**Straight Cut Borders:** Top, bottom and side borders that meet at a horizontal seam. Sew sides on first then top and bottom.

**Straight Grain:** The grain of the fabric that runs lengthwise or crosswise through the fabric. This is the most stable, less stretch.

**Strip Piecing:** A technique where strips are cut and pieced together and then pieced strips are cut to design a block. Used in rail fence quilts as well as many others.

**Stippling:** A technique used in both hand and machine quilting to flatten an area of a quilt and create texture.

**Template:** A shape or design that is placed on fabric and used as a pattern to trace or cut around. Often used as an applique when finished.

**Tension:** The amount of “pinching” done to your thread as it flows through your sewing machine. Thicker fabrics need a higher tension (a harder pinch so the thread doesn’t flow out too quickly), and thinner fabrics need less tension (a lesser pinch to let the thread out easily to prevent puckering).

**Thimble:** Protective covering for your finger used during hand quilting or sewing binding and/or applique.



**Tied Quilt:** Technique where a quilt is layered with backing, batting, and top. Generally, it is laid out on a large table and periodically tied and knotted with pearl cotton or yarn to hold it together instead of quilting it. Generally high loft batting is used with this technique.

**Top Stitch:** The process of stitching on the exterior side of a project to finish seams or folds to keep them in place. Usually paired with a longer stitch length which looks more professional and can make it easier to go in a straight line. It can also be known as Edge Stitching if it is done near a fold of fabric.

**UFO:** A term used to refer to an unfinished object or project. Most quilter have many projects on the table at any given time.

**Wadding:** Batting or wadding is the middle layer of the quilt, adding to the warmth and loft of the after product.

**Walking Foot:** Presser foot attachment that helps to easily feed more than two layers at the same rate.

**Whole Cloth Quilts:** Name given to three single pieces of fabric sandwiched and sewn together in the quilting process. The design is in the quilting.

**WOF:** Width of fabric. You will find this abbreviation in many quilting patterns.

**Wrong Side:** The “back” side of the fabric; usually the opposite side of a distinctly printed fabric.